(c) Generally there was an appreciation of Indian foreign policy, particularly that of good neighourliness as well as our "Look-East" policy.

Final Pact Arrived at between India and Pakistan

1729. SHRI AHMED PATEL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the newsitem published in 'The Hindustan Times' (New Delhi) dated the 23rd June, 1997 under the caption "India, Pak close to final pact on all major issues"; and

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto and details of the final pacts arrived at by India and Pakistan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A Joint Statement was issued in islamabad on 23 June, 1997 on the counclusion of the second round of the resumed Foreign Secretary level talks between India and Pakistan. It was decided that the two countries will address, *inter alia,* the following subjects: (a) peace and Security, including CBMs; (b) Jummu and Kashmir; (c) Siachen; (d) Tulbul Navigation Project; (e) Sir Creek; (f) Terrorism and drug trafficking; (g) Economic and Commercial Cooperation; (h) Promotion of friendly exchanges in various fields. They also agreed to set up a mechanism, including working groups at appropriate levels, to address all these issues in an integrated manner; the issues at (a) and (b) above will be dealt at the level of the Foreign Secretaries, who will also coordinate and monitor the progress of all the working groups. Both sides further agreed to take all possible steps to prevent hostile propaganda and provocative actions against each other.

The Joint Statement provides the basis for a comprehensive, constructive and sustained dialogue between India and pakistan. It is the framework under which substantive discussions would take place on various issues. We look upon it as a step forward in our efforts to engage Pakistan on a broad front with the objective of building a relationship of trust, friendship and cooperation.

Begging Rackets in Saudi Arabia Involving Indian Children

1730. SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the begging racket under operation in Saudi Arabia, involving a large number of Indian children;

(b) whether some Indian children were caught begging in the holy city of Mecca;

(c) if so, the number of those children; and

(d) the details of efforts made to bring to those children back home?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) As per the information available with the Ministry of External Affairs, during the year 1997 till date, a total of 226 Indian children, who were caught begging in Jeddah and Holy cities of Mecca and Medina were deported from Saudi Arabia in five batches, *viz.* on Jan. 13, Feb. 3, March 20, June 17 and June 24, 1997.

(d) The children during their detention prior to deportation, were visited by officials of the Consulate General of India, Jeddah at the deportation centres and necessary travel documents were issued to them for travel back to India. The first three batches of children were handed over to the respective guardians/ parents after proper identification by the local authorities in the states from which the children hailed. Of the 4th and 5th batches of children, two children were handed over to their parents at Mumbai